



In Māori mythology, Tiki is the first man created by either Tūmatauenga or Tāne. He found the first woman, Marikoriko, in a pond; she seduced him and he became the father of Hine-kau-ataata. By extension, a tiki is a large or small wooden or stone carving in humanoid form, although this is a somewhat archaic usage in the Māori language. Carvings similar to tikis and coming to represent deified ancestors are found in most Polynesian cultures. They often serve to mark the boundaries of sacred or significant sites.

Tiki carving is one of the oldest art forms known to man, and all original Tiki carvings are unique. Each island culture introduced another variation to the carving technique. In most tiki cultures, Tiki statues carved by high-ranking tribesmen were considered sacred and powerful, and these were used in special religious ceremonies. Tiki statues carved by anyone other than a high-ranking tribesman were used simply as decoration.

Some island people still believe in the power of the Tiki, just as some statues are created to be used as focus objects for ceremonies—similar to voodoo rituals. Statues carved with threatening expressions are often used to scare away evil spirits, and others with more amicable expressions are created for use in religious ceremonies, healing services, or to bring good luck.

Each individually carved Tiki statue, whether stone or wood, displays the artistic creativity of its time. Many archaeologists believe the statues each have a unique story to tell, and that these specific symbols and

carvings represented aspects of ancient life. For example, some carvings include spiritual symbols or other signs of devotion to the Gods they may represent.

Some of the most famous Tiki statues in the world reside on Easter Island. Volcanic in origin, as are several other islands in this region, Easter Island is located in the Pacific Ocean. It is the world's most remote inhabited island, located about 2200 miles off the coast of Chile. Traditionally, the island has been known as Great Rapa or "Rapa Nui," but it's oldest name, "Te Pito o Te Henua," means "The Center of the World."

Most of the Easter Island Tikis are carved directly out of the lava rock from the Rano Raraku volcano, and more than 880 statues have been discovered and inventoried. Some are as tall as 33 feet, but the average size is 14 feet. It is estimated that nearly 200 men were required to move a single statue from the place it was carved to its resting place.

Rich Greene, NJ, by the way, just recently gave a seminar on Tiki covers at the Tiki Oasis convention on August 8-12, annual 5-day event in San Diego, California for lovers of Island lifestyle and purveyors of Polynesian culture. The event draws *thousands* of people! Rich also took some hobby applications...just in case!

There are a number of collectors who collect Tikis (and I'm one of them). The only 'largest collection' info I have on Tikis is that Don & Carol Fisher, WA, had 702 such covers in April of 2000, but Chester and Cheryl Crill, CA, have a much larger number now, but that collection is uncounted at this point in time.

